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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000042

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E.O. 12958: Declassify 01/21/1919
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CHAUDHRY HEARS ALL THE RIGHT
THINGS FROM LIBERAL DEMOCRAT LEADER FILAT

REFS: A. 08 Chisinau 1276 B. 08 Chisinau 1258
[C](#). 08 Chisinau 1168 D. 08 Chisinau 580
[E](#). 07 Chisinau 0830

Classified by Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry under
1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a January 15 meeting with
Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) leader Vlad Filat,
Ambassador Chaudhry questioned Filat on pre- and
post-election conditions, and received positive
responses on freedoms and democratization in
Moldova. Filat described his plans for an
energetic, country-wide campaign, and his hopes
for a "non-aggression pact" among the larger
opposition parties. End summary.

The Active Democratic-Protest Party

[1](#)2. (C) Filat described an impressive number of
PLDM public actions, designed to engender citizen
participation under the motto "If rights are not
respected, they must be acquired." The actions
included a petition campaign to restore the
election of the president by popular vote, and
demonstrations to support media freedom and better
prices for farmers' produce. Filat noted that
these actions were meant to benefit all parties in
the fight against the "fear of the Communists."
(Note: See ref A for an account of a December 2008
PLDM demonstration, and ref D for a report on
Filat's accusations of state intimidations of
party members. End note.)

Taking Responsibility for Moldovan Reform

[1](#)3. (C) On Transnistria and EU integration, Filat
made the same argument that Ambassador Chaudhry
had made in other meetings and fora: if Moldova
did what it should do to promote the market,
media, and political freedoms, EU membership would
come without prodding from Brussels. And, Filat
continued, under the same circumstances, residents
of Transnistria would see the real benefit of
rejoining the right bank. Filat pointed out that,
at PLDM branches in the Transnistrian cities of
Tiraspol and Bender, he always heard the same
message: there is no point in unifying now, if it
means only exchanging Smirnov for Voronin, and the
corrupt system on the left bank for something
similar from the right bank.

Pro-NATO, Despite the Polls, and Retail Politics

[1](#)4. (C) Defending his party's support for Moldovan

NATO membership in Moldova despite low poll figures favoring the move, Filat said that the people were being manipulated by the dominant Russian-language media, and did not know why they opposed NATO. To overcome this problem and GOM restrictions on media freedom, he promised that party activists, having benefitted from NDI and IRI training, would wage an energetic campaign, "with surprises," knock on every door, and shake every hand during the 60-day election campaign. (Note: Many of our contacts and many media outlets have predicted an April 5 date for elections. End note.) Filat also stated that his party workers would urge those who declare their opposition to the PLDM to vote for the non-Communist parties that had a chance of reaching the six percent vote threshold needed for representation in Parliament.

15. (C) Filat said that 80 percent of Moldovans saw their future as part of the EU. Asked why the vote base of the Party of Communists (PCRM) remained so strong, Filat replied that the PCRM changed its message from pro-Russia to pro-EU, though without making any of the necessary reforms. Referring to the President in a Russian accent, Filat also noted that "Vladimir Nikolayevich Voronin" dominated the state-subservient media with his message that all was well.

Election Outcome Depends on Crisis and Returning

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16. (C) Asked for his election predictions, Filat said that everything depended on two hard-to-predict factors: the impact of the global financial crisis, and the number of citizens working abroad who returned home to vote. He declined to predict which parties would make the six percent threshold, but expressed hope that the PLDM could sign a "non-aggression pact" with two other parties that shared a common program on the EU, political freedoms, and a market economy. Those parties, he said, were Our Moldova Alliance (AMN), led by Searafim Urechean (ref B), and the Liberal Party (PL), led by Mihai Ghimpu (ref E) and Dorin Chirtoaca (ref C). Filat also declined to speculate on possible PCRM candidates for president.

Comment

17. (C) Filat responded positively to the Ambassador's urgings that, if he should become part of a government-forming coalition, he would move swiftly to form a government and implement already-legislated reforms. Whatever may be the sincerity of his views, Filat is the most energetic and organized practitioner of modern democratic campaign methods. To convince voters and help create a non-PCRM government, he will need to overcome his image as a corrupt wheeler-dealer, and accusations that he has purchased officials and members from other parties.

CHAUDHRY